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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed preservice teachers' responses to contemporary published scholarly articles dealing with various facets of the American political economy in relation to the historical developments in schooling. Subjects, six students in a "Historical Perspectives in Education" course, commented in writing on their weekly reading assignments and on what they heard about the social and historical foundations of education in lectures and discussion. Subjects included a black male, two Anglo males, two Anglo females, and a Hispanic female. Results indicated that: (1) the black male and the two Anglo women were accommodating to the messages conveyed in the reading selections which attacked the status quo in education; (2) the two Anglo men opposed the texts; and (3) the Hispanic female resisted the readings. Findings suggest the individuality of all readers regardless of their gender and racial background, and further indicate that the course readings were more or less accepted by the respondents depending on their roles in a cultural minority or majority depending on their self-concepts. (Eighteen references and a list of the readings in the order encountered in class are attached.) (RS)

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Literacy as a Sociocultural Process: Examining Reader Responses to Contemporary Education Texts

by: Mary Frances Linden

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Literacy as a Sociocultural Process: Examining Reader Responses

To Contemporary Education Texts

by: Mary Frances Linden

Abstract

The focus of this study was to encourage my pre-service teachers to respond in writing to the readings for the Historical Perspectives on Education course syllabus. In our state university, this is a required course in the teacher preparation program meant to elicit discussion about moral, ethical, and policy issues as they are relevant to the history of education in the United States. Eliciting the reader responses, my four objectives included: 1) To analyze pre-service teachers' responses to relatively current, published scholarly articles dealing with various facets of the American political economy vis 'a vis the historical developments in schooling; 2) To concentrate on six case studies as exemplary ethnic and gender insights into pre-service attitudes towards the readings; 3) To determine how accepting these pre-service teachers are of critical (i.e. feminist, Freire (1970), Giroux (1983, 1988, 1989) interpretations of the American educational systems within the historical contexts of the American political economy; 4) To reflect on Dewey's (1900, 1902, 1937) concept of education. Practice would be engaged through contemplative action about myself and my students' orientations toward open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness, as well as skills of keen observation and reasoned analysis (Zeichner & Liston, 1987).

Background

Whereas much of reader response theory has concentrated on the efferent-aesthetic (Rosenblatt, 1978) or the intertextual relationship between the reader and fiction (Iser, 1980), this study departs from this vein of research in at least four ways. First of all, non-fiction literature, rather than fiction, is the catalyst for reader responses. The nature of the class readings suggests purposeful reading as opposed to reading for enjoyment. Second, this study proposes to analyze student reader responses to articles about American schooling relying on constructivist or post-structuralist paradigms which attempt to explain political relations in society and schools.

A third variation of this reader response research is to examine the chosen undergraduate university respondents as either members of a cultural majority or minority relying on Freire (1983), Giroux (1983, Barthes (1975), Corcoran (1989), among other modern constructivists to find the readers' stances to the class readings. This

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approach is contrastive to the work done by Beach (1991) and Hynds (1985, 1991). In addition, potential cultural and historical awareness of the politics of schools and actual awareness revealed in the reader responses will be considered. Pertinent to an understanding of the students' involvement with the readings is written indication of their resistance to or accommodation to it (Corcoran, 1989). My rationale for pursuing this project was to gather information would aid pre-service teacher instructors, as well as higher education instructors of language arts, political science and history, find ways to analyze their students' levels of reflectivity as well as involvement with course readings. My inspiration included work by Zeichner and Liston titled "Teaching Student Teachers to Reflect" (1987), which focuses on evaluation of "a program oriented toward the goals of reflective teaching, greater teacher autonomy, and increasing democratic participation in systems of educational governance" at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Their conceptual orientation aided in determining methodology for analysis of data gathered.

Method

Subjects for this study included 59 pre-service teachers who wrote responses to the class readings. Materials included 17 articles by various scholars who either examined social and educational policies or various aspects of education in a democracy. Procedures used to gather this data included collecting, compiling, and organizing written statements made in response to what the students read before class and to what they heard about the social and historical foundations of education in lectures and discussions each week. I requested that the students comment on their weekly reading assignments in any fashion they desired before and after my class lectures on Tuesday. It was explained that this request would aid me in gaining understanding of how they were responding to what they were reading and what I was telling them about the social and historical foundations of education. Each Tuesday, the first and last 5-10 minutes of class were used to respond to the class readings. The following Thursday, the students had a discussion about the readings. At this time, the students were encouraged to relate the readings to personal experience, as well as to question and expound on the authors' theories and philosophies.

Results

I read and considered the responses, discerning general response positions such as accepting or rejecting what they read. I have completed case studies of six subjects. I selected my only black student's responses, as well as those of a thirty-four year old Anglo woman married to a Mexican American, two Anglo males, one Anglo female, and one Hispanic female to utilize for the purposes of this report. (The ages of the others ranged from 20-26.) I must

emphasize that these students' responses were not necessarily the "best," the most interesting, the most elaborate, or most indicative of cultural awareness or unawareness. They were, on the contrary, some responses which merited attention because of the students' personal experiences in their respective schools and communities.

Reader responses were analyzed using three criteria. The first includes a look at the summarization of articles versus the personal evaluation of text noting connections made by first person verbalizations. For example, such comments include, "this article says," "I think," "the author said," etc. A second indicator of reader acceptance or rejection of material is described as a personal, communal, or global view indicated by manipulation of the ideas espoused by authors. One subject commented on the male dominance of one author's point of view with the following: "I would have thought that contemplation on education by someone as prominant as Conant would be without gender bars." Pertinent to these categories was concentration on the self, the school, or the larger society. The third criteria of assessment of the student written communiques relied on Van Manen's "levels of reflectivity" which follow: Level 1 --treats the institutional contexts of classroom, school, community, and society as unproblematic; Level 2--assesses the practical ends of educational actions and consequent actions; and Level 3--"incorporates moral and ethical criteria into the discourse about practical action" as school relates to a larger picture of society.

Discussion

Case 1

Rick, a black male, who came from an inner city school, made several observations which were salient. His earliest responses to the literature included summaries of the main ideas of the articles. He describes two sociologists who wrote and influenced a Darwinian approach to social policy-making as "elitist" versus tolerant. The article traced the progression from Darwinian philosophy to testing, eugenics, and eventual tracking in schools.

Coming from a minority group, Rick manifests negative feelings in his discussion of Karier's (1972), "Testing for Order and Control" and Brigham's (1975)"A Study of American Intelligence." He involves himself in the first person as he critiques the social practices indicated in the following:

> I feel that IQ test are all biast and reflect only the knowledge of those that made them up. These test were made up, more than likely, by upper class American white males (Nordics). These same test are given to immigrants that know little of American culture.

> How can these tests and studies show a true measure of the intelligence of anyone other than upper class American white males (Nordics)[?]

In response to Karp's (1985) "Why Johnny Can't Think," Mick shares some feelings of frustration towards his non-African American classmates, schools in general, and tracking of minority students. He forges a forceful and scathing attack on the dominant culture in our society in the following account:

> I am glad a reading of this nature is finally brought out in this class. The harsh realities of the "real" education system most of these students have never seen. Most pride themselves on their private school background and sit ignorantly and idle to believe that there are not injustices in education.
>
> This reading hopefully, will bring a hand to the face and pull these students up to date with the "other" education. This being upper class move up, lower class pushed down. Many of these students are future education teachers. Many will fall into the ranks of these mentioned in the reading. Being a product of low income family and an overcrowded inner city school system, I know first hand, "a self-proclaimed expert" on this type of educational dividing. I was put in the lower classes and was called a troubled child. I wanted to read Mac Beth not do work sheets.
>
> Finally after talking to my principle I was given a "probation" period to take the "good" classes. I made it through, I asked questions. Now starting my junior year here at ATM, I am the first of my entire family to go this far. There is something wrong somewhere and it all starts in grade 1. I ask myself Is slavery still around and enforced in our schools? Tainted and called vocational education.

Mick shared an African-American reality with me, and displayed level three reflective awareness about ethical and moral issues in schools and society. His commentary on white versus black education are straightforward and cutting. In another response, he says: "The level at which the students were educated was a joke. The white students headed for college while black students headed to work on the farm of the white students." There are several

other comments which show the same kind of bitterness about the power structure that he feels controls and subverts the education of African Americans in this country.

Case 2

Ruby, a thirty-four year old female married to a Mexican American, had many insightful comments about the readings. Her life experience and two children in school, enable her to describe her view of the "reality" of schools versus the "ideal" of them. Level three reflectivity was present in many of her assessments, as she broached rhetorical questions about the kinds of actions that can be taken by teachers and citizens in a democracy.

In her first response, Ruby said that "she had never considered schools' history, importance, nor their makeup." She makes a connection between local and corporation leaders in this comparison:

> I thought about the history of the local school boards whose players are enumerated /cast on the building plaques, composed of civic leaders yet (illuminated the reading) corporate leaders (i.e. bank president).

In response to the Cooley and Ross article, Ruby reflects on more subtle residual effects of Ross's xenophobic and racist ideas as the readings forced her to take a more piercing look at society. She elaborates on her attitudes within the collective mindset of the larger society:

> If I had not had to read (the) Violas essay, I would have passed it by as historical B.S. and gone on with life. Yet forcing me to read it resulted in thankfulness that social Darwin ideology and such extreme xenophobia and racism didn't procede as Cooley and Ross proposed. Unfortunately, I believe seeds of their 'progressive' theory are found throughout our social, political, educational existence, if only in the quiet recesses of our mind--but thankfully not active, but with deliberation as they proposed.

Ruby's response to "Why Johnny Can't Think" manifests her level three reflectivity about moral and ethical issues in schools as she targets some of the hypocrisies of the institution:

> (The article) decrys our nation's schooling situation revealing the inadequacy of selfcriticism and the continuing demise of schools promoting citizenship--professing one concept and practicing another keeping change from happening. Too much bureaucracy, too little actual teaching call for grass roots movement.

> With knowledge of another way of looking at what is going on or what could be going with America's schooling, I will give the reading a second reading. I feel frustrated that I believe my fellow students will just "Oh my" the guest lecturer's information and go on with life as status quo. We as TAMU students don't have enough motivation to make changes.

As Ruby confronted the concepts of the sociological theory of ideological hegemony and related it to the role of the teacher, she expresses her concern that some "truth-distributing" force is needed in society. Although she says that schools need improving, she is not sure that "detracking" or educating students in a more democratic fashion would necessarily cure the ills of schools. She realizes that what schooling offers is problematic. However, she is hesitant to prescribe "detracking" as a panacea to reform schools:

> The article on teacher authority and dominant ideology was convicting, and convincing. I disagree on one point--authority. I believe authority distributing truth of even the ideological hegemony should not be thrown out with the 'bath water.' If there is no central believeable authority, what foundation do students have to stand on? About detracking and emphasizing heterogeneous grouping, I'd never looked at those issues from this viewpoint.

Ruby showed consistent understanding of the articles in ways which supported my interpretations of what we read. She has children, and has had more life experiences than most of her peers in the teacher training program. Her perspective of schools as an outsider and her own problems with her children's educations seems to give her perhaps more sophistication in "reading the world" (Freire, 1985) than the five other students who are in their early twenties and are unmarried. In spite of Ruby's disenchantment with "the system," she feels inclined to leave "authority" in place, which she feels gives the environment a stabilizing effect . This represents a curious dilemma to me because Ruby might also accept sexism in schools and society in order to maintain stability with authority in place.

Case 3

Mabie, a Mexican-American female had many comments about the style of the course readings and relatively few about their contents. In the centralization unit, she expresses "understanding about what kind of pressure schools all over the country were under" to centralize and become efficient. She extrapolates:

> The businessmen and professionals were in control of school boards. They didn't give much responsibility to the superintendents when it came to school curriculum. I like this article.

Some unexpected (on my part) viewpoints that surface in Sabie's response to the Violas article indicate that she likes textbook organization. She also intimates that textbooks, unlike the articles described as "one-sided," present multifaceted views of historical issues. She expounds:

> The second article by Violas was much longer and drawn out. Some of the readings we are assigned are long and boring. They aren't written like textbooks. Many contain onesided viewpoints with no real explanation of what the author feels. The manner in which the readings are presented does not encourage me to read them thoroughly. It is easy to get side-tracked when reading these papers. I do get more interested in the writings the more modern the materials get because I've had more experience with it and it affects me in a stronger way.

This need for personal involvement with the work in school would support Dewey's and other more moderns' theories of the necessity of relevance to students' experiences as criteria for curricular focus.

In reaction to "The Function of Education in Democratic Society," Mabie says that the material made her fall asleep. Additionally she found the print small and "hard to focus on." Finding the sentences too long, she indicated that she "had trouble making sense of what the author wrote." On the contrary, Mabie liked how the article "Education and Social Change" was divided into sections with subsection titles that helped her flow through the reading.

Mabie summarized main ideas from "Testing for Order and Control in the Corporate State" and said, "This article was pretty long, but had something to do about immigrants and industrialization in America...The article also talked about testing people's IQs and segregation." In assimilation of the concepts presented in Brigham's "Study of American Intelligence," Mabie simply says, "The blame for the decline of (American intelligence) is put on the mixture of different races in America."

Length of the readings and her frustration with information-loaded lectures seem to pervade her attitude of frustration in one of her responses. She seems to be addressing the teaching methods and curriculum in the following statement:

> I still think the articles are sometimes too long and sometimes it's hard to get lots of meaning from them, especially if you aren't that educated in history. I think too many names are thrown at us in lecturer--this makes me lose interest and I'm just copying down names from history. Maybe if we could focus a little more on fewer parts of history, the readings could make more sense and be more enjoyable.

The question of tracking and implications for educational equity in a democracy were the crux of the discussion ensuing from Van Doren's "Education for All" and Preskill's "Notes on James B. Conant," Mabie, ironically, seemed to show a transition from not being in favor of tracking to favoring it. She showed some understanding of the issues involved in "ability grouping." In a personal connection to her own schooling, she says:

> Now that we've discussed the readings, I feel that Conant's article and his recommendations were good ones (maybe not all of them), but I used to hate the idea of splitting people in groups (high, middle, low), but now I understand that by keeping some people back or pushing someone forward before they are ready just hinders their development. Every case is different and should be treated accordingly .

As Sabie grappled with Portes and Truelove's "Making Sense of Diversity," she refers to her own experience and then discusses social issues with cogency and involvement expanding from a first person view to a global view of society in response to Barbara Deckard's "Self-Fulfilling Prophecy" and Rosser's "Boys, Girls, and the SAT," as well as Chomsky's "Propaganda Mill." Sabie explicates:

> The article on Hispanics was very interesting especially since I am Mexican-American. I agree very much that the "portion of decision makers" have too much power and they let contributions and money cloud their judgments of what is best for the country as a whole. I think people are afraid of change, especially males letting women into the work force (they may find out that women can be just as smart, if not smarter) at decision making .

Mabie's demonstrated compliance with many of the articles, and her failure to comment on troubles encountered by many people from her background. Corcoran would attribute this to a tendency discussed by Henry Giroux as well. And that is "structured silences" in literacy practices that do not engage the students in finding their "culture-specific significances involved in textual ideology." Corcoran also describes this neutralizing reading process as passive, rather than active or resistant (Corcoran, 1989).

Case 4

Terry, an Anglo female student, consistently showed level three reflectivity tendencies, revealing an understanding of the critical opinions of some of the authors and questioning discriminatory ideas of others'. She feels as Charles Eliot that "schools not only teach students the three R's but also other skills and the development of character." Terry agrees with the rhetoric of the article with the importance of allowing children to enjoy school and "to want" to be there. She values the ideal individuation of schooling signifying that "no two students' programs would be alike." Likewise, Terry agrees with John Dewey's precept "that education does play a major role in social change."

Terry surmises the gist of "Testing for Order and Control in the Corporate State" as likening school to the business world or a factory "(giving) the impression that school was there to produce what society needed." She equates segregation with treating the lower class differently and therefore eliciting "lower achievement" from students classified with such labels. She feels that testing discriminates against some by "asking questions only Anglo-Saxon children would be able to answer." She questions the premise of a "A Study of American Intelligence" that "seemed to discriminate against immigrants' intelligence. Supporting her argument she says, "Our entire country at one time was made up of all immigrants."

Terry describes inequities in schooling in the US. in her response to Parker and Thompson's "Opportunity, Equity, and Excellence." She questions society in the following:

> We like to think our schools are perfect, but in reality, they are not. Women are still treated differently than men. This relates to the SAT on one end and in the workplace too. Why are women in the same positions as men and still get paid less? Minorities experience the same discrimination. Will our society ever get out of this trend?

Terry differentiates between the goals set forth by Van Doren and Conant in the 1950's. Her words convey the duality of classical versus vocational education:

> Van Doren and Conant clearly had different ideas about education. Van Doren was concerned with educating everyone to better our democracy. Conant, on the other hand, emphasized testing and grouping students. He was more concerned in finding the more intelligent and "gifted" students. Van Doren would have the students reading the great books etc., whereas Conant was more concerned with girls being in home ec and the boys should go to woodshop.

In a similar manner, Terry indicated that "Why Johnny Can't Think" brought to surface many issues that she felt were "truly occurring in our school systems." She summarized the high points of Karp's message:

> Overcrowded classrooms and the heavy emphasis on "right answers" has been going on for years. It is also ironic that the best teachers are given the best students and the weaker teachers are given the struggling students. Instead of making the system better it seems they might be getting worse. One principal said he didn't care what went on in the classroom as long as it was quiet in the halls.

Her concluding views of Chomsky's "Propaganda Mill," Terry describe schools and society at a level three of reflectivity:

> Students are encouraged in class to only give the correct answer--and not really discuss anything. Students are brought up believing what they say really does not make a difference--or they don't have a chance.

It is interesting that Terry responded very agreeably to all of the messages of the articles. She identifies with women's and minorities' issues. In gender and race, she represents the majority of public school teachers. If all white, female teachers were as aware of the pitfalls of our education system as she seems to be, would public schools be more helpful to individuals regardless of their gender, class, or race?

Case 5

Danny was an enigma to me. His responses were more thorough than the other students'. Although I requested that students write responses to their readings "before" and "after" my Tuesday lectures, he was one of the few students to do so. In elaborated accounts, he explained many of the articles in manners which I would consider in line with my interpretation of them, yet he also seemed to alter his views of the readings, in his "after responses" which led me to question his desire to say, perhaps, what he thought I wanted to hear. (This will be addressed in the contexts of the discussion of the articles which follows.) Some Level 3 reflectivity was shown in his reactions to the readings, and some of his contradictions lead me to question the authenticity of his intentions.

Danny's responses also showed developmental (Vygotsky, 1986) progress moving from summaries to evaluations of the authors' messages. Whereas he expressed openness to new ideas, he also contradicted himself in several responses concerning the odds of school and subsequent social success in light of cultural diversity. With regard to Cooley and Ross's "Progressive Social Philosophy," Danny delves into the relationship between man and society. In his own language, he utilizes the concepts of the authors:

> The direction of their beliefs were mainly focused on that of education and its outcome. They felt that the teaching of a man and then letting him loose on society can either be good for that society or dangerous for it...With this in mind, it would be important to educate not only for brain smarts, but for morals and ethics also.

Danny summarizes Eliot's "The Function of Education in Democratic Society" with the following: "Since schooling was used not only to teach children skills, facts, and concepts that they would need to live a prosperous life in a democratic society, democracy and what it stands for should be promoted in the school. Yet he has an interesting notion of what teaching democracy in schools entails as shown in a contradictory assessment of the term. In this quote, he says:

> The promotion of democracy through the schools were very important also. Children are extremely susceptible to new information and moral views. If democracy was promoted in the schools then children will accept this form of government as they enter adulthood with no questions asked. In fact, the concept of democracy would be planted subconscioncely into the student along with democracy's morals and how the student should act to properly succeed.

The wording in this response conjures in one's imagination a procedure to democratize students with implants. Few of us would argue that many societies in the world would be the better if we could implant democratic, ethical, and moral behavior codes into our the citizenries' subconscious. Yet how democratic would we be if we did this to students? Would we need signed releases to proceed with teaching or "operating" in this manner?

In the lecture establishing the social milieu for intelligence testing, Dan felt that intelligence can be achieved "if the kid is in the right environment without any barriers" on one hand. On the other hand, he indicated serious adherence to Brigham's ideas of inferior cultures lowering the American intelligence pool. He said with sincerity and drew a diagram to support his ethnocentric idea that:

> This article also speaks of a decline in each succeeding five-year period since 1902. I can conclude that because of our increase in technology and through new knowledge, our kids are better educated about every five years while an immigrant from a country that cannot be compared with ours has no real increase in their country's knowledge.

After lecture and class discussion, Danny attributed academic success to elements outside the realm of "intelligence." He looks at a broader view than schooling in the following response:

> I really wish I could remember everything that was mentioned in class that day. What I remember as sticking out was the fact that it is in a minorities culture to not do good on standardized tests and in school. (He was referring to the paraiah theory of caste minorities that I mentioned in class). In academia, I believe your teachers, tone, and kids in your classes, your upbringing, your society, and finally your family's academic history are what determines your scholastic success. I list teachers as the #1 because I've seen what a teacher

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> has done to snot-nosed and hoodlum kids firsthand. Teacher do make a difference, with the promotion or suppression by classmates accelerating or promoting respectively the inevitable outcome.

It is difficult to surmise from the second response what Danny deems as important about intelligence tests when he attributes almost every other possible factor to academic success. In a later response to cultural diversities in education, he says:

> The biggest diversity among the cultures is their level of confidence as compared to others. Most minorities have a precedence set by their parents, most of whom have never excelled educationally. Other diversities: organization, academic skills, manner of dress, speech level, health level, teacher/student relations.

In Danny's response to Conant, he mentions a perplexing twist to sexism in education. He says, "(Conant's) article is very male-dominating. I would have thought that contemplation on education by someone as prominate [sic] as Conant would be without gender bars." As has been discussed in more recent treatments of sexism in texts and the school, sexism was still very much a part of the established pattern of expectations of education in the 1950s, and as many feminists would agree, still is today. We talked about education becoming more accessible for women, and we mentioned how the Sixties had revolutionized much of the thinking about the matter. It is interesting to note that this white male student is fascinated by the sexist educational policies of the Fifties, and the well-known personality holding such a viewpoint. Is he saying that he could expect sexism from himself or others not as well-known as Conant?

Another allusion to sexism in education issues occurs in his reaction to "Boys, Girls, and the SAT." He goes into detail:

> Boys, Girls, and the SAT is a bunch of gibberish. I feel that if a test uses masculine examples then that is just too bad. I don't really think a female while taking the test really contemplates the fact that their test has male overtones. I mean, she would have to be doing very bad on the test and searching for an excuse other than the fact that she's unprepared. There is one reason why girls score lower, it is the most obvious of reasons:

> women are traditionally of a lower deducing skill level. Their potential is not but since its in their blood and a minority of women attempt rebellion, they are doomed before they start.

It is difficult to discern if Danny's thought development really evolved although his responses moved from a summarization to first person accounts in many cases. He reflects about the big picture of society, and yet I feel his responses are reactionary while attempting to be progressive and quite fallacious in some cases. His opinions seemed to change from one view to the opposite before and after lectures. His indicated confusion about moral and ethical issues with respect to ethnocentrism, elitism, and sexism in education concerns me.

Case 6

Mat, a white 26 year-old male who aspires to graduate psychology studies held some fascination for me. Because he was absent frequently, his responses are not as numerous as the other subjects'. He explained that he was having family relocation and moving problems, and as a result was out of town and frequently commuting. Nonetheless, his reader responses indicated a depth of perception about educational issues. Yet, he wrote from an impersonal third person point of view, usually short commentaries. His response to the Conant reading was, "The U. S. competition in education with the Soviet Union was an important catalyst in yet another attempt to reform the schools." He foregoes to comment in an approving or disapproving manner to the events brought about with the United States race with the Russians to extend space explorations attempts. Responding to an article written from the opposite point of view, he says:

> After discussing Van Doren's ideas, maybe they are not as idealistic as I percieved them as I was reading. His point about education is an excellent way of relating to democracy.

In response to the I.Q. testing articles, he describe "before and after" impressions. He said before the lecture:

> I feel that I.Q. and achievement tests are the best way we have for assessment in academics. They (the tests) do have certain flaws, but no other means of assessment is as feasable and cost effective.

After the lecture, he said:

> I think higher education is not for everyone. the opportunity is there and achievement in academics, as in all other facets of life, made possible through strong will and hard work. Testing is only a part of the system. I believe it to be the best way so far.

My understanding of these reactions to the readings show antithetical characteristics. The responses are slightly clinical, uninvolved, and uncritical. While the analysis is somewhat in-depth, the comments are not developed in a manner which shows empathy with the downtrodden in our schools and other social institutions. They note understanding and some complicity with the existing power structure in spite of the individual's own hard luck in his life circumstances. Before the class adjourned for the semester, this student told me that he had really enjoyed it, and that he was planning to do graduate studies in educational psychology. Given the emphasis on testing in this field, maybe we can better understand the students accommodation to the practice of testing and routing people in the pursuit of work and careers in the present education system.

Discussion

Recent attention to the politics of the text is relevant to my discussion of these students' reactions to the material they encountered in my course. Although many of us do not concentrate on the politics of the text, it is an issue being discussed in the contexts of experiential curriculum (Apple, 1992; Ogbu, 1992). Does a text represent family, class, gender, race, generation, and location that we as readers must reconcile in a political battle going on within the text? Giroux's radical pedagogy suggest "three ways that textual ideology or the hegemonic structure of the school can be approached: accommodation, opposition, and resistance (1989)." Applying these three potential reactions to the respondents in my study, we find that a black man and two Anglo women who were accommodating to the messages conveyed in reading selections which attacked the status quo in education. Two Anglo men opposed the texts, and a Mexican American woman resisted the readings. Ferdman (1990) suggests that different cultures differ in what they consider literate behavior and that the kind of literacy education that individuals encounter can influence their cultural identity. If those with minority status are never led to question the text and the status quo, perhaps they blindly accept the text. Or they might consider themselves assimilated minorities and therefore not feel the political struggle that others might.

Literary criticism posits some useful ideas for analyzing the findings in these cases. Three ways of reading include text within text, in interpreting we produce text upon text, and in criticizing we produce text against text. Resistance to texts can be attributed the critic's recognition of her or his own values." In this light, the respondents, Rick, Ruby, and Terry accepted the readings as they related to their own situations or at least as they were able to imagine themselves in a non-dominant role in the existing social structure. On the other hand, Danny, Mat, and Mabie resisted the social implications of the "undemocratic" nature of education--Danny and Mat--both Anglo men, traditionally dominant in our society and Mabie--a Mexican American woman a traditional minority. Perhaps, Mabie considered herself very assimilated and therefore was unable to account for those less acculturated than herself. Perhaps, Mat's interest in psychology which relies heavily on testing and measurements hindered his agility in considering alternative assessment methods causing him to justify testing as "cost effective" and the "best way" we can sort students. Danny's responses, contradictory in nature, showed accommodation, opposition, and resistance to the readings.

Although the findings of this study were somewhat inconclusive, we can draw conclusions from my respondents which indicate the individuality of all readers regardless of their gender and racial background. Furthermore, we can discern that the course readings were more and less accepted by the respondents depending on their roles in a cultural minority or majority depending on their self concepts. Finally, the literary criticism and theory which is normally applied to the study of fiction can be adapted well to analyze responses to non-fiction literature.

Implications

My role as a teacher in a democracy is not to change my students, but rather to understand them as part of the large multicultural society. In the process, I can show them a different way of seeing what they know to be the reality of schooling and society, but I cannot force to alter their world view. I know that many educators concerned with critical pedagogy realize the importance of examining the curriculum as it affects students' lives. Further analyses of texts, students, and pre-service teacher attitudes require more research of this type.

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Appendix of readings in order encountered in class

(All of the following articles were assembled in a set of class readings with proper copyright permission granted.)

Powers, Bert. *Historical Conceptions of Society, the Individual, and Education.* (Compiled this collection; no citation except in the collection.)

Tozer, Steve. *Introduction to Tools of Inquiry: Four Terms.* In Kenneth D. Benne, A Conception of Authority, New York, Teachers College of Columbia University, 1943.)

Tyack, David. *Forming the National Character: Paradox in the Educational Thought of the Revolutionary Generation* from Turning Points in American Educational Theory by D. Tyack. Copyright 1967 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on Virginia* from The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 2 by Andrew A. Lipscomb, ed. Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903, pp. 203-207.

The Defects of the Irish Immigrants, 1851 from The Massachusetts Teacher, October, 1851, pp. 289-291.

Katz, Michael B., Doucet, Michael J., and Stern, Mark J. *Early Industrialism: Public Education and Social Problems.* Reprinted from The Social Organization of Early Industrial Capitalism by Katz, Doucet, & Stern, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, Copyright 1982.

Mann, Horace. *Excerpt from Mann's Twelfth Annual Report.* Reprinted from "Twelfth Annual Report in the Republic and the School," Lawrence Cremin, ed. (New York; Teachers College Press, 1957 by Teachers College, Columbia University, pp. 84-97.

Brownson, Orestes. *Decentralization: Alternative to Bureaucracy?* From The Boston Quarterly Review, October 1839, pp. 393-418.

Tozer, Steve. *The Emergence of Modern American Schools: The Progressive Era.*

Washington, Booker. T. *The Atlanta Exposition. From Up From Slavery.*

DuBois W.E.B. Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others. From The Souls of Black Folk.

Tyack, David. *Centralization and the Corporate Model: Contests for Control of Urban Schools, 1890-1940.* Reprinted by permission of the publishers from The One Best System by David Tyack, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974.

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Preskill, Stephen. *Notes on James B. Conant's "Twenty-one Recommendations."*

Portes, Alejandro and Truelove, Cynthia. *Making Sense of Diversity: Recent Research on Hispanic Minorities in the United States.* Reprinted from Annual Review of Sociology, 1987, Vol. 13, pp. 359-385.

Labov, William. *Academic Ignorance and Black Intelligence.* Reprinted from The Atlantic, Vol. 229, No. 6, June 1972, pp. 59-67.

Deckard, Barbara Sinclair. *The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Sex Role Socialization.* Reprinted from Chapter Three, "The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy: Sex Role Socialization," (pp. 27-58), 3rd Edition by B. S. Deckard, 1983 by Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

Rosser, Phyllis. *Girls, Boys and SAT: Can We Even the Score?* Reprinted from Educational Research, Vol. 6, January 1988, pp. 48-53.

Karp, Walter. *Why Johnny Can't Think.* Reproduced from Harper's Magazine, June 1985.

Herman, Edward S. and Chomsky, N. *Propaganda Mill.* From The Progressive, June 1988, pp. 14-17.

Tozer, Steve. *Dominant Ideology and the Teacher's Authority.*

Duffy, John. *Getting Off Track: The Challenge and Potential of the Mixed Ability Classroom.* From Democracy and Education, Fall 1988, pp. 11-19.